

Did Christ Eat the Passover?

A recent number of the EVANGELIST contains an article with the above caption in which is advanced a view of the matter which is, in some particulars, unique. I have no means of knowing to what extent this view is held throughout the church, neither do I know the scriptural authority upon which it is based; but as it is a departure from the established method of defending our practice as drawn from the example of the Last Supper, it deserves some consideration. The defense commonly made when we, as a church, have been charged with perpetuating an obsolete Jewish custom in our method of observing the Lord's Supper, has been that the meal eaten by Christ on the night of His betrayal was not the Passover, and that it is nowhere called so but is called only "a supper." As a church, we have taught that this meal was distinct from the passover, that it was eaten twenty-four hours before the legal time for its observance, and that it was intended as the inauguration of a new feast to be observed in the Christian dispensation forever.

In view of the seemingly conflicting character of the many passages of scripture bearing upon this point, the teaching of the church is very unsatisfactory and its position hard to be defended. The writer of the article in question, realizing the old position to be untenable, has thought to advance to a new and stronger one. He has found that "The plain unvarnished teachings of the inspired writers of the New Testament teach that Christ ate the Passover with His disciples." But while he admits that they ate the Passover, he claims that it was not the Jewish Passover.

If this position can be successfully defended it relieves the church of the imputation so often put upon her of perpetuating a Jewish rite which became obsolete more than eighteen hundred years ago. The writer of the article from which I have quoted advances no argument in defense of his position, but simply expresses his convictions.

As the subject is an important one, and this view of it differs from that usually taken, I should be glad to see a complete exposition of the subject from that standpoint, viz—that Christ ate the Passover but not the Jewish Passover. In the meantime the statement of a few difficulties and objections to this view may not be out of place. The simple fact that the meal which Christ ate with His disciples is spoken of as the Passover and not a Passover implies that it had a previous existence; that the observance was in accordance with a time-honored custom. The disciples, sometime previous, had anticipated its occurrence and made inquiry of the Master concerning the preparation to be made for its celebration. The Passover which Christ ate was at Jerusalem—the place which the Lord had chosen for the annual observance of this great Jewish feast. Christ and His disciples came from Bethany for this purpose. The time of the feast of which Christ partook was the beginning of the 15th of Nisan—the time at which the law declared the Jewish Passover must be celebrated. Moreover the feast observed at Jerusalem on this night is expressly declared to be the Jews' Passover—see John 11:55. The idea then that this great commemoration festival was abrogated when the Jews as a people became disobedient, or that the command of Ex. 12:24 had lost its force before the type had met its anti-type, cannot be entertained. The Jewish Passover as such was still in existence and its observance demanded of every Jew.

But if the Passover which Christ ate was not the Jewish Passover, could it have been the Christian Passover? A single word on this point is sufficient. In 1 Cor. 5:7, we read that Christ is our Passover. As the Jews ate the flesh and sprinkled the blood of a lamb, so Christians to-day partake of the body and blood of the spotless Lamb of God by the symbols of the bread and wine of the communion. The Christian Passover is something entirely different from the meal which Christ ate with His disciples; it was instituted at the close of that meal. From those considerations it would appear that if we admit that Jesus ate a Passover with His disciples on the night of His betrayal,—on the 15th of Nisan—we cannot es-

cape the conclusion that he ate the legal Jewish Passover.

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A Stern Fact.

In these days of sectarian controversy, when each Christian denomination endeavors to justify her practice by claiming that they have apostolic precept and example for it, the minds of many honest persons have been and still are very much confused. For the different modes in which the doctrines of the church are observed by the various Christian bodies, each one appeals to the old Church Fathers. As proof that her practice was the practice of the early church. It is strange how all of them seem to quote even the same authorities for their manner of observing the Lord's commands, and although the manner of practice is so greatly at variance.

In these denominational disputes, we find the church Fathers so much quoted, that we naturally become tired, if not disgusted, of hearing so much about Tertullian, Ambrose, Augustine, *et al*, and so little about Christ. I believe that both history and the Bible is read more by certain classes for the purpose of finding something that will justify their own peculiar notions and practice, than for the glory of God and the vindication of truth.

To pick out a solitary passage and separate it from the context, and then found a certain theory or doctrine from that isolated text, will never give us the true meaning of the Bible. This is the origin, I believe, of all the hobbies that many sects hug so dearly to their souls. We can not grasp at the beauty and splendor of a structure, by merely investigating and admiring a brick or a plank here and there. We must go far enough back of ourselves until we can view the whole building in its entirety. Indeed, before we are competent to form a proper conception we must view it from every side. One-sided views lead to one-sided opinions. We should take the Bible as a whole, and not merely cling to certain portions, to the entire rejection of the rest. Remember, that the great object of Christianity is not the observance of forms, but the welfare of the soul. It is to save souls from sin, and not merely to convert minds to certain views of the Bible, that we should labor.

NOSAM.

Free Thought.

Let one think what he pleases, let one think what he pleases of others; this is his prerogative, and should not be questioned or deprived of it. But when he says it, he should be careful how he says it. We should respect each other's thought as men. If I wish to join a church or moral society of any kind I wish to be respected for it. We all possess a distinct nature of our own, and should be respected for it. Each one has his life to live and answer for in this world and the world to come.

Society must be respected of whatever nature it may be, when conducted in a moral and manly way. If I wish to join church I should be subject to the law and ruling of the same, and if I do not intend to do that I am no man for joining it. If I do not join a certain church for some law or rulings in it, I am no man if I do not respect the same. If a man wishes to wear a certain cut or style of garment he should be respected so long as it is decent.

If I do not join a church of any kind, on account of belief, rulings or anything of whatever nature, I wish to be respected and especially by those who do belong to church. In other words no one should find fault with any one so long as he does not interfere with his financial or moral life.

The church member who criticises a moral man for his life does a great wrong to himself and the one spoken of. His words should be of an instructive nature. Kindness, love and consoling words are the ones that win and not reproof. The man who does not belong to any church organization and really thinks it unnecessary to belong to one should by any means not try to destroy the moral influences obtained through churches and their kindred associations.

We must acknowledge that outside of churches although in the churches there are many things done that are reprimanded by their own members,—there is nothing by way of a society that teaches morality and submission to sobriety. These are the necessities for a good civilized government of any kind. Why is it that so many who want to be good loyal citizens do not see the necessity of a moral and social influence among our children; so that the rising generation may become more civilized and loyal to good etiquette.

They try to tear our churches and church societies—to pieces and leave us no substitute. Why is this? Because they have nothing to give that is not couched in the vocabulary of pure Christianity. When I say pure Christianity, I do not mean church members, but loyal men and woman to honor. I believe and positively believe that the strongest infidels on earth are church members. Everything that is honorable is found written in the vocabulary of Christianity. But the trouble is: why is there so much opposition to pure Christianity? Because it is abused by those who pretend to be followers of it, and make only mockery of it. The infidel who speaks disrespectfully of pure Christianity is not honest with himself nor his fellow man. But when he speaks with contempt of the manner in which churches treat Christianity then they speak the voice of a Christian. Free thought comes from nothing else than disloyal church members and according to the ideas of such members, a good moral man has equal chance for eternal bliss and happiness, if there is such a place and time; hence the Saviour of the World, is the man or woman who can do the most good on earth for the human race in preserving health, honor, and fidelity.

S. S. LINDERMAN.

Martin Urner.

But little appears to be known or said of Martin Urner in the present age of the world. He was one of the first six persons baptized by the Tunker Brethren in America, and probably was the first one among that number baptized by Peter Becker. And since he became an able preacher, and is known to have been one of the leading men of the church, some account of his life, may be read with interest by many.

In a letter at hand, written by Abram H. Cassel, of Harleysville, Montgomery Co., Pa., Feb 20th, 1884, the following sketch is contained.

Martin Urner Sen., was born in Alsace, then a province of France, near the Rhine about the year 1695 and was raised in the Reformed faith.

He emigrated to America 1715 and settled among the "Hermits of the Ridge" now called Roxborough near the confluence of the Wissahicon and Schuylkill rivers, and was for a while an associate with that mystic sect there, called the "Woman in the wilderness," founded by the hermit Johan Kelpius, in 1694. But after the Brethren came over in 1719, he soon made his acquaintance with them, and it was not long until he was so fully convinced of the duty and necessity of Christian baptism, that he applied to them, as a candidate for it, with five others; namely himself and wife. Henrich Lanceis and wife; Frederick Long, and John Mayly (Myly) which were the first fruits of the Brethren in America. They were baptized by Peter Becker in the Wissahicon, on the 25th of December, 1723.

He remained with the Brethren in Germantown until some time in 1724, he with several others moved to Coventry, in Chester Co., Pa., near to where Pottstown now is, and soon organized a little church, under the oversight of Elder Peter Becker, by whom he was commissioned to serve this little church as an Exhorter or Minister in the first degree.

His labors were so blest that he was soon promoted to a higher degree; and in 1729, he was fully ordained to the office of Elder or Bishop, with the imposition of hands by Alexander Mack. At which time he took upon him the entire oversight of the church; and served it faithfully until 1755 when he was removed by death, in the 61st year of his age. His remains are buried there in the Brethren graveyard at Coventry.

This is now a short outline of nearly all that is certainly known of him. But would say yet, that there was another preacher and Elder by the name of Martin Urner, Jun., in the Coventry church, a nephew of Martin Urner Sen.

OBED SNOWBERGER.